

Chapter 7: Of vital importance

Let us have a closer look to vital points.

As stated before, attacking vital points will cause pain and compliance, but are not easy to use. If trained properly their manipulation can make your strikes more powerful, release you from a grab or hug and increase the likeliness of success in a joint lock.

They can be protected by something as simple as normal clothing, they are difficult to spot on a moving person and the adrenaline rush that you will feel during a fight will make your fine motor skills disappear making the task at hand even more complicated. These reasons also support my idea that the training sessions must be full contact in order to get used to use your techniques under unfavorable conditions.

But, what are vital points? Under this esoteric name are what also can be called pressure points. They are not magical places where you can kill your enemies with your fingertips but anatomical structures that can be rubbed, touched, hit or manipulated to cause pain. As karateka we can use them to increase the effects of our blows, to enhance techniques or to subdue without hurting.

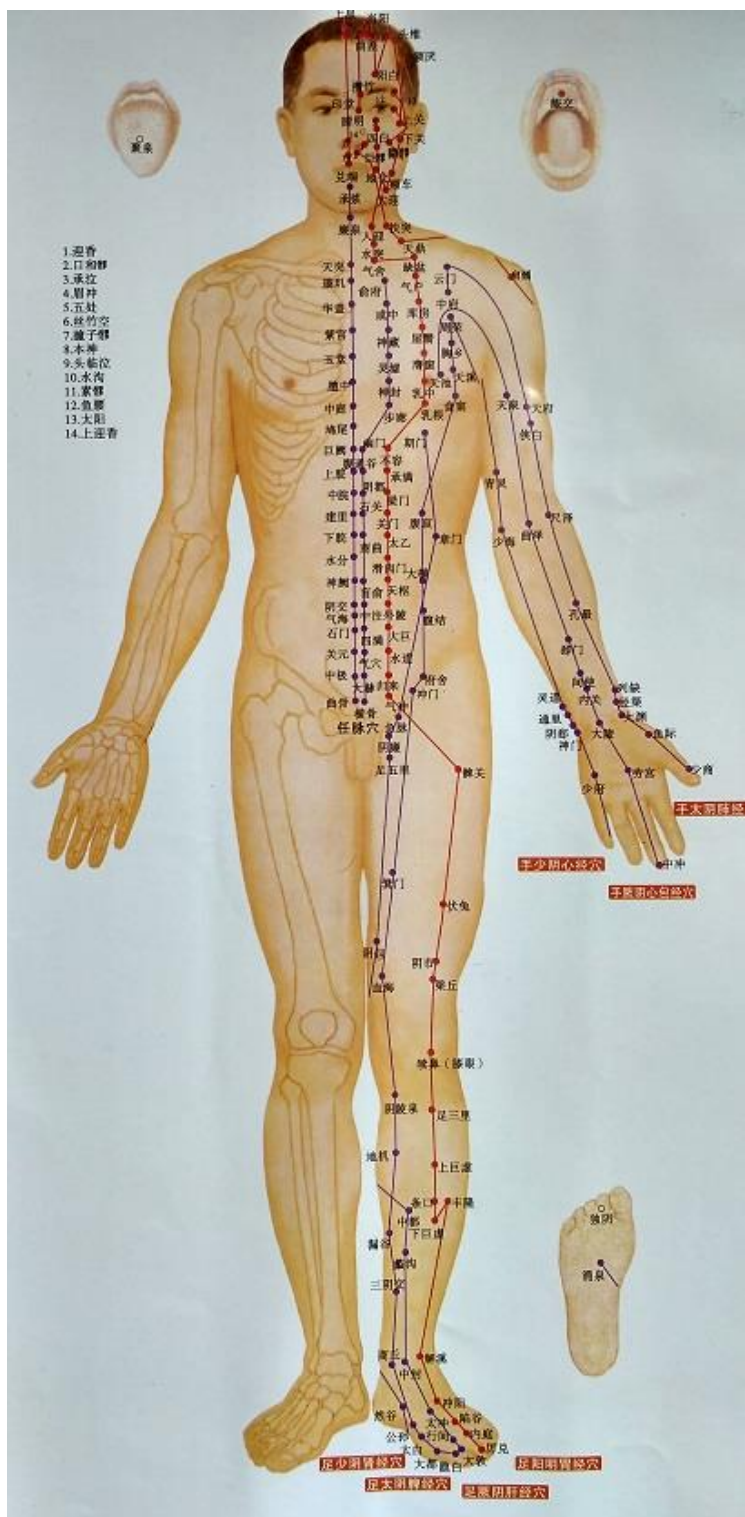
The vital points are points of the body where nerves cross, where they are closer to the skin, points where blood vessel surface, weak parts of tendons...

They are not insubstantial points but real parts of the body that hurt more when attacked. We all know some of those weak spots but we are going now to check them on a Chinese acupuncture map. Acupuncture points are not the same as the vital points that we are studying. Acupuncture theory is based on meridians (qi vessels that run through the body), theory that I am not familiar with, but most vital points are located in acupuncture points. We will use the following charts as starting points. The reader can use them to check his/her own body and see the effects: self-discovery will lead to better remembering.

According to acupuncture theory, any manipulation of the points in the charts will produce positive benefits, so do not fear a potential health problem by just checking if it hurts or not.

If it hurts, it can be used in actual combat.

You will find a little information in the subsequent pages about how to induce pain and the body weapon that I find more suitable to do the job. But if you happen to have an object in your hand it can also be used to attack the points: a key, a ball pen, a spoon, a stick... or even a pressure-point-fighting designed weapon, like the kubotan.



In this whole body map you can see the center line that runs from the head to the groin. Attacking the center line will always produce a good effect. The points in the sternum can be attacked by seiken, the points in the face by any body weapon.

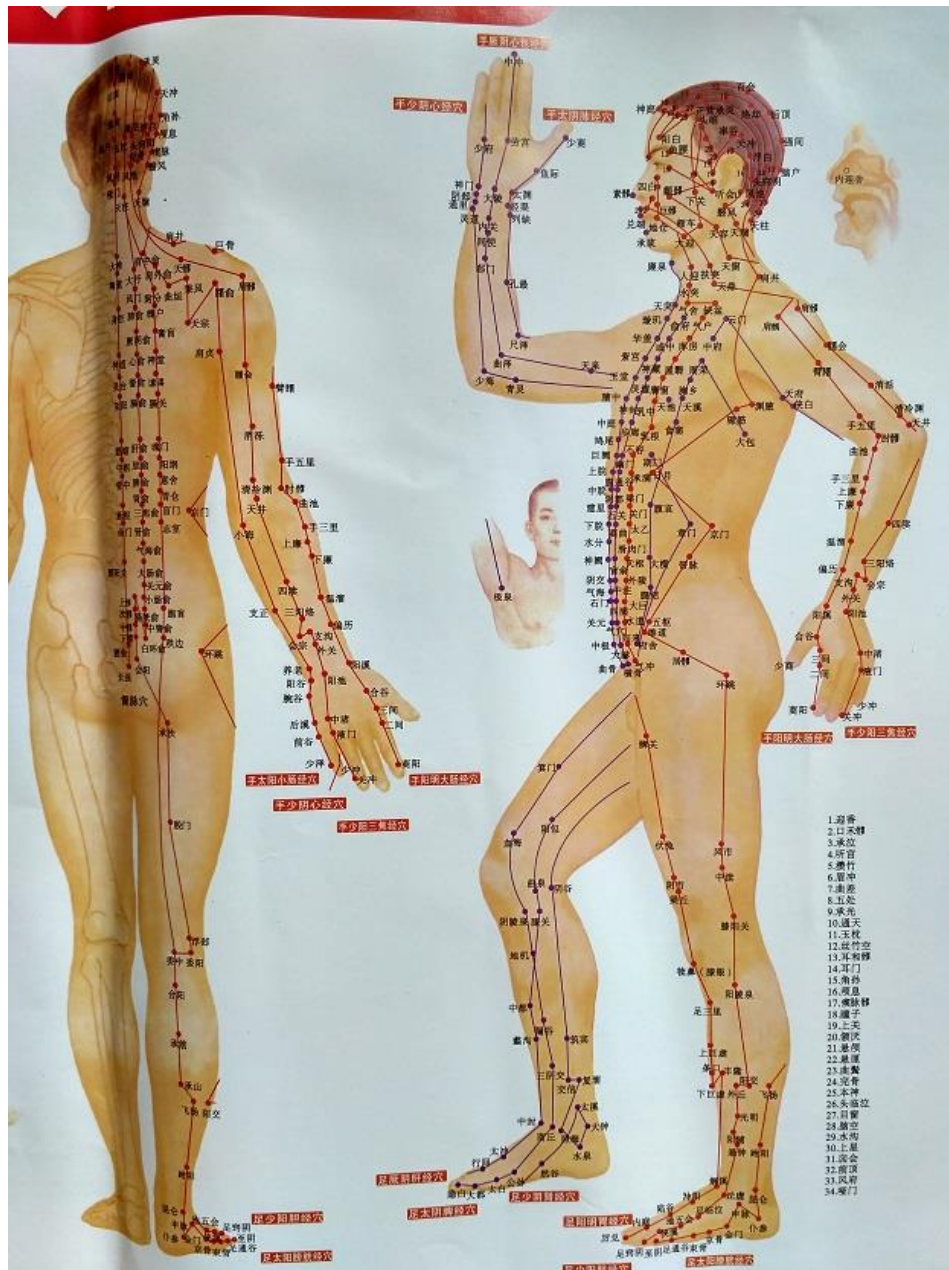
The ones in the chest (not the center line ones) are located in the pectoral muscle, one of the biggest and strongest, so a punch there may cause pain but not enough to end a fight. Better attacked by knuckles during close fighting, as on the ground.

The point in the center of the arm, over the elbow, will be really painful when inserting the thumb there.

The points of the leg can be attacked using the heel. Even if your kick misses the point it will be a useful technique.

The one at the top of the head will cause a knock out if kakato geri is used.

The points of the foot can be attacked with a stomp if you are grabbed from behind, and also using your toe to step on them.



In this side view we can see a small detail of the armpit. The tumb can be used there, for it is difficult to access with a punch. A yoko geri kekomi using kakato can be used too.

The shoulder can be punched with mawashi tsuki causing the arm to stop responding.

The points in the ribs under the armpit can be punched for a knock out or pressed with the thumbs for a shocking reaction.

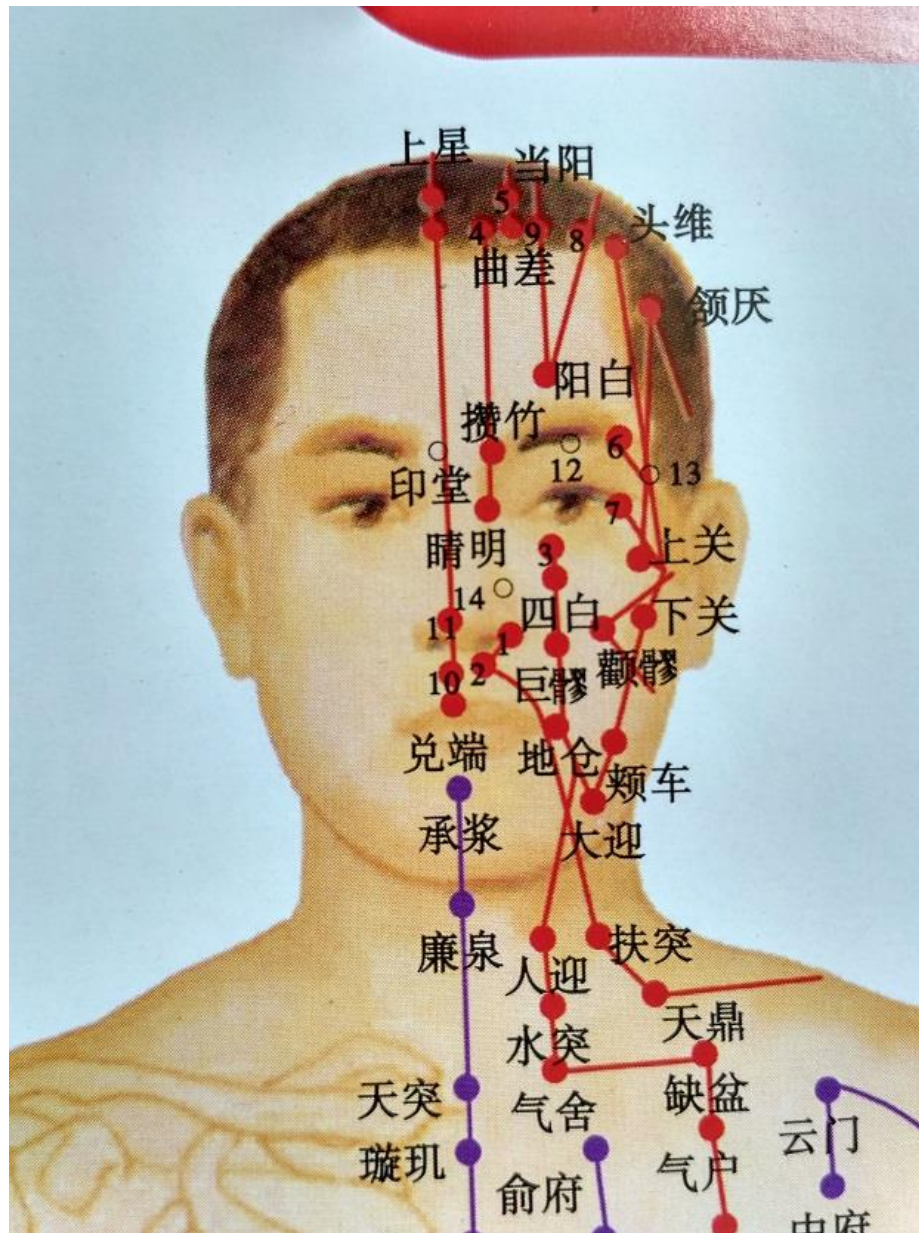
You can notice that there is no mention of the weak spot in the middle of the thigh. But we can use it still. A good mawashi geri with the shin bone will work wonders. The knee is also a good option.

I don not recommend to attack the point at the hip insertion from the side, as it is a really hard place and it will be more painful for yourself, and also a waste of time.

All the points of the head can be used with a punch or other hand techniques, such as shuto or haito.

Regarding the back chart, the center line of the back runs over the spine, so any hard blow there will cause regrettable effects, so the highest care must be had.

The point in the middle of the calf is a ground fighting favorite.



Let's have a closer look at the face chart.

The nose can be attached with seiken, or simply by using pressure with teisho. You can use the other hand in the back of the head to have augmented pressure, and this will give you the choice of where you want your foe's head to be.

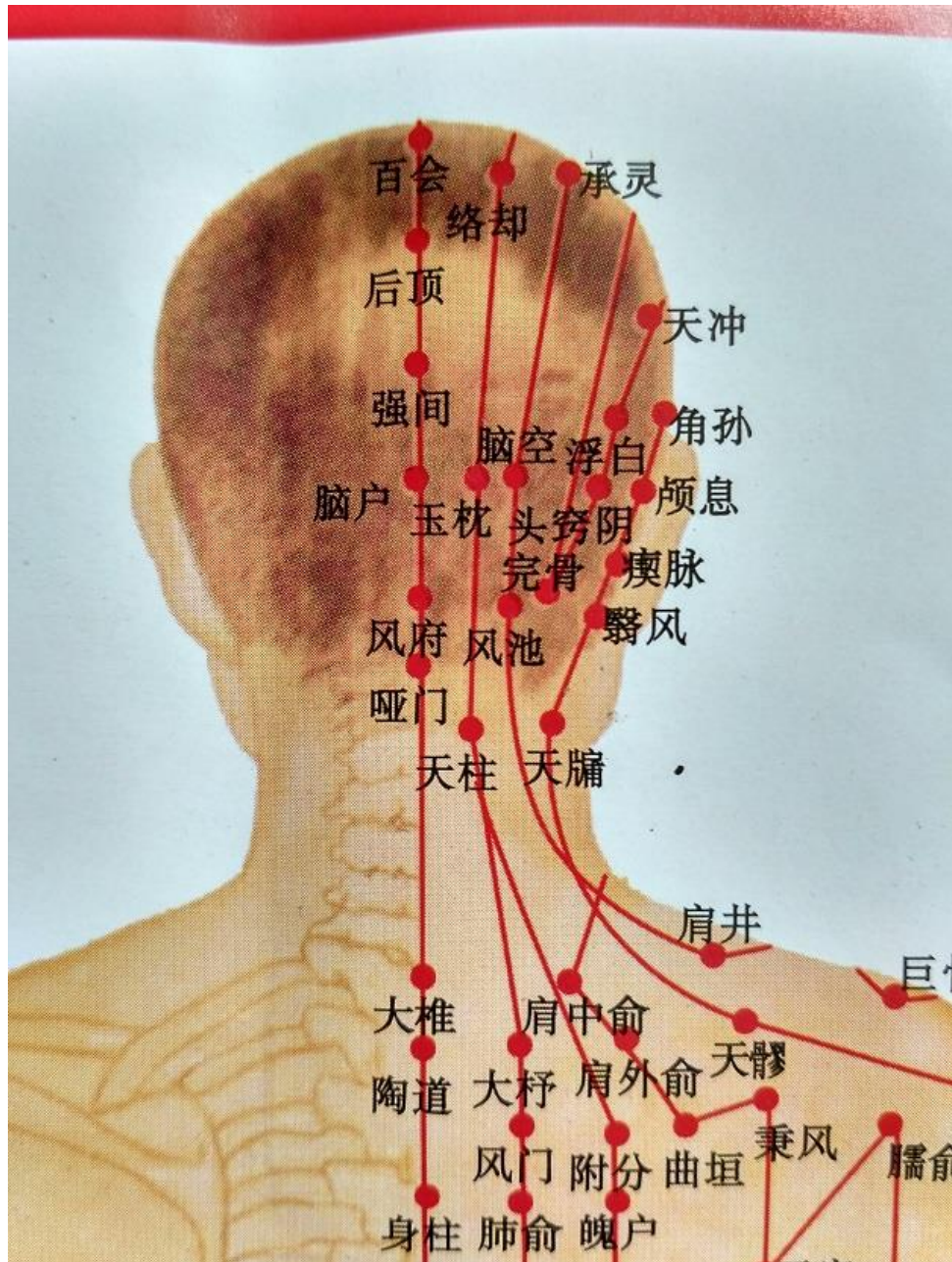
The points along the jaw will produce unconsciousness if hit hard. It is what we see in boxing or MMA when a seemingly soft punch ends with one of the combatants on the floor.

Using the points of the neck and collarbones with nukite (all fingers or only one) to produce excruciating pain.

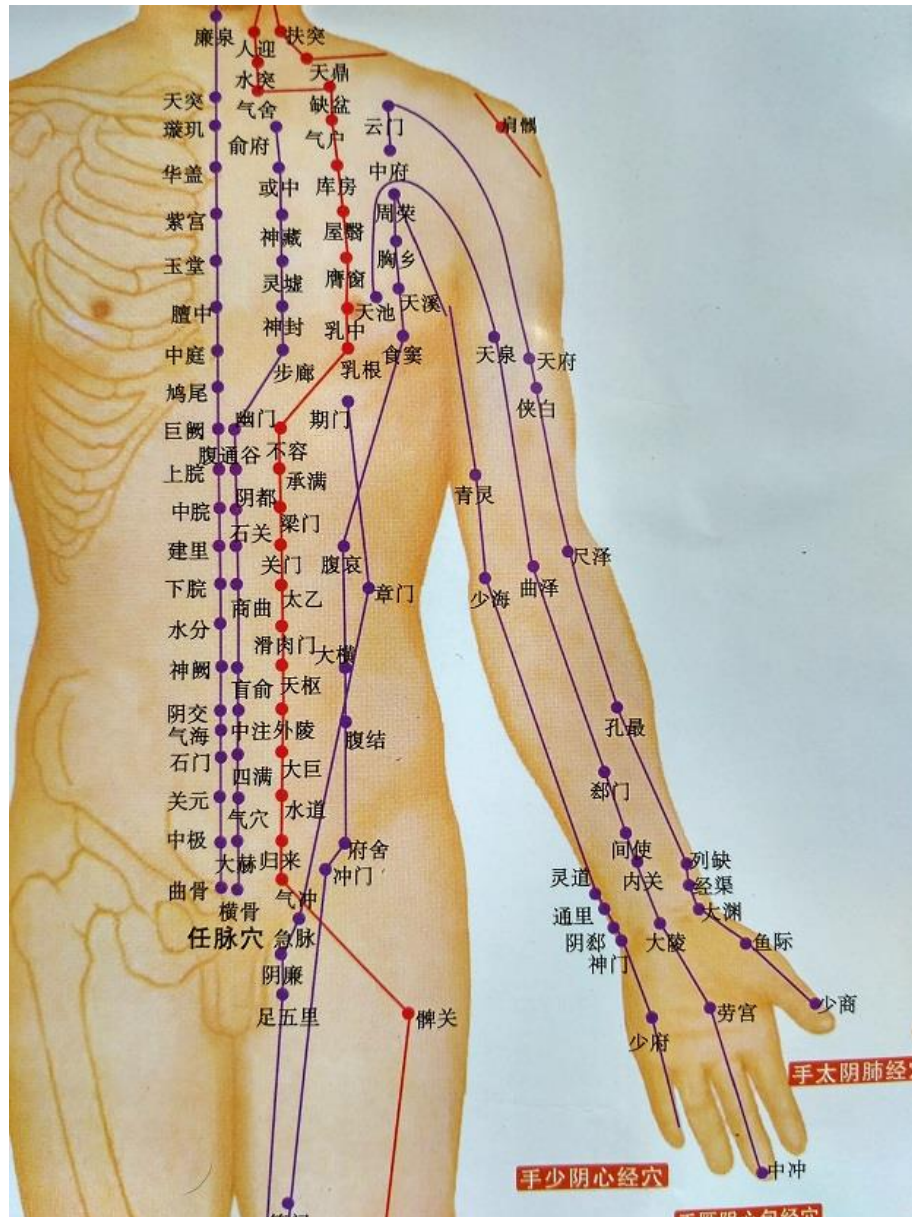


The points of the neck can be manipulated with the knuckle of the thumb, the fingertips or any point object, such as a call pen or a key.

The temple can be punched with devastating effects.



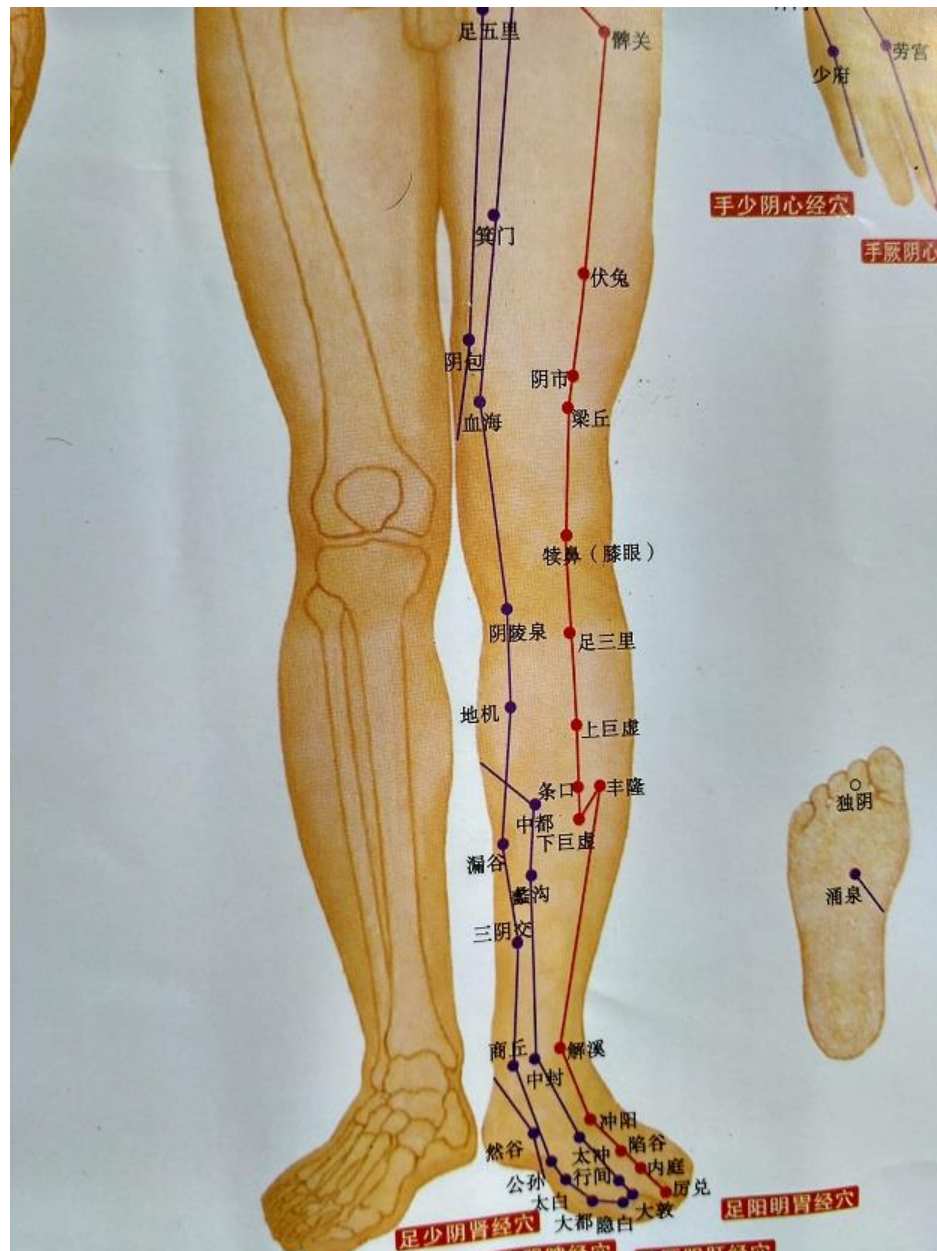
These back of the head points are not really suitable for manipulation.



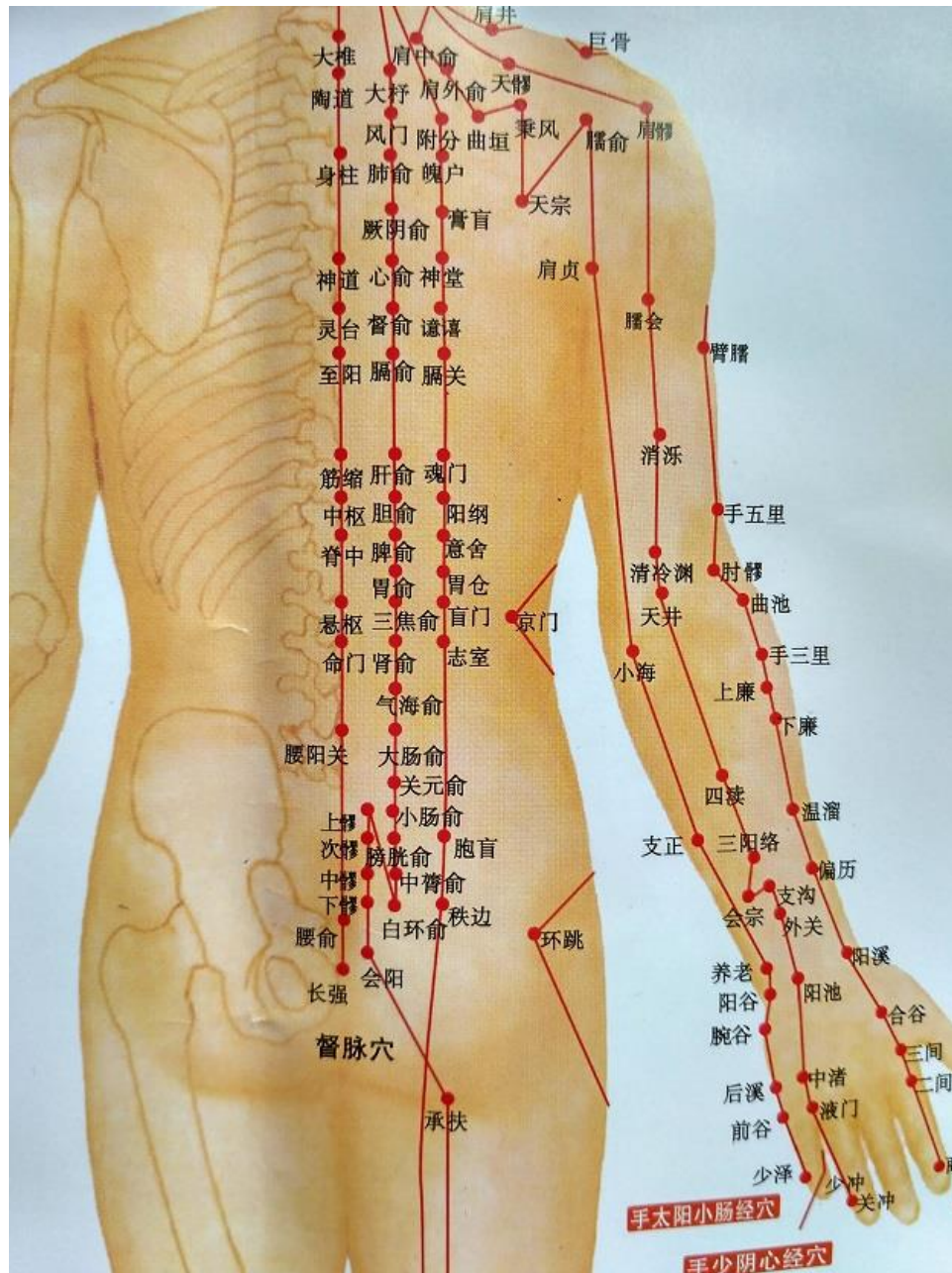
A closer look at the arm and hands reveals some places where grabbing can help to set up a joint lock. It also shows where to attack if you are being grabbed.

I want to pay special consideration to the wrist points (both sides). If you use soto uke or uchi uke to block a punch you will find that sometimes the block

causes a big pain in your arm. If you are the one who punches you can also feel it. They can be hardened to reduce these effects, but you can use them when you block to cause some pain to your adversary.



This close up of the leg shows a very interesting point, about five centimetres over the ankle, in the inside of the shin bone. If pressed with the knuckle 45° downwards it can take down a man as big as a bull. Easy as that. It can be also stepped on, Naihanchi style.



The point over the elbow (not the tip of the elbow, but the one just over it) is where you must apply pressure if you want your elbow lock to succeed. Miss it and it will not work. It can be pressed with any part of the hand, or any other body part: knee, armpit, shin, elbow...

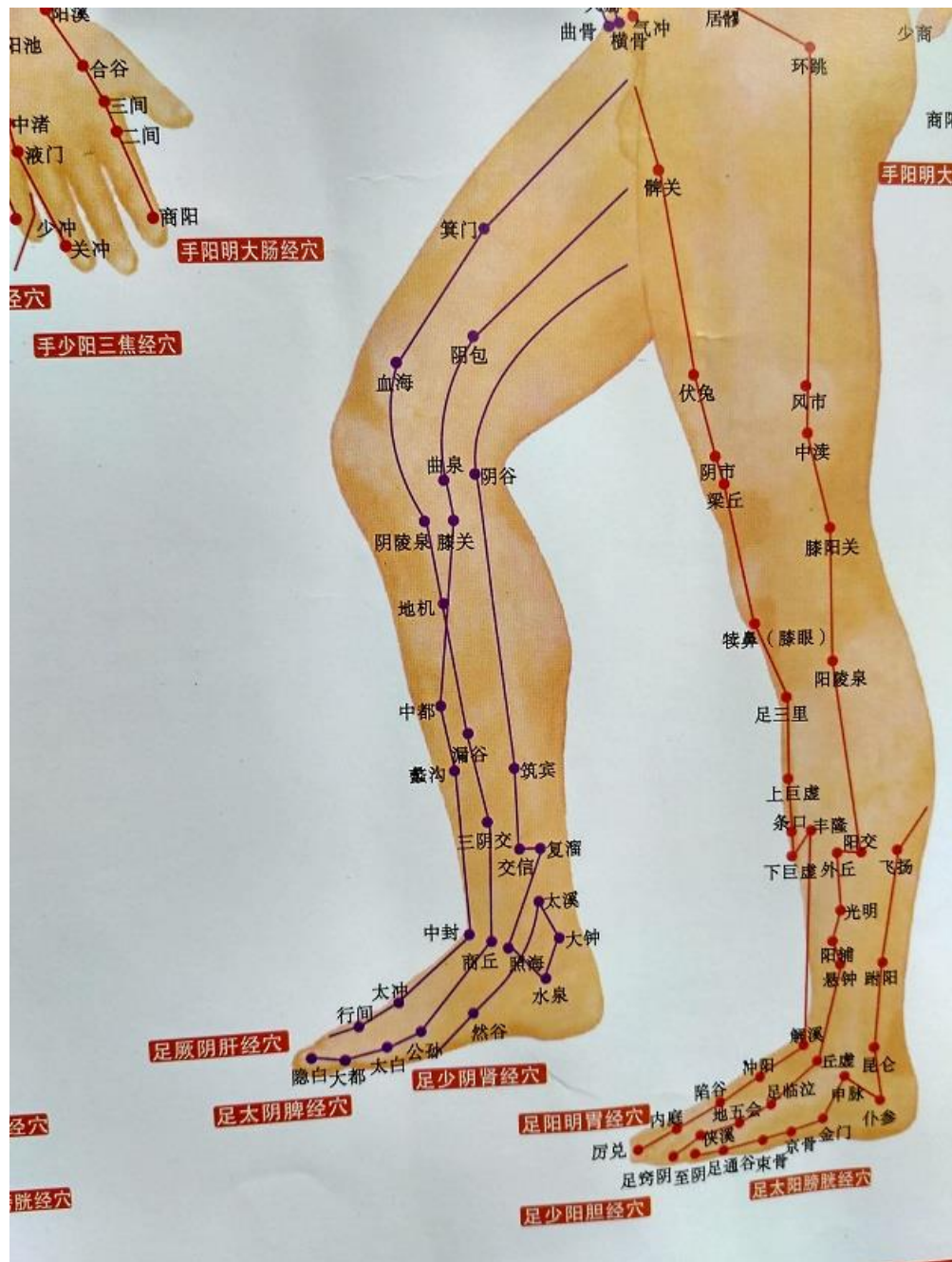
The point just between the pinky and the ring finger can be attacked with your finger nails, as I painfully learnt in Okinawa.

The back of the forearm kind of mirrors the front side, and can the fingers can be used to cause pain, but a big force must be applied to make it useful.

A good technique if you are being hugged is to rake your knuckles along the back of the grabbers hand. There are plenty of places to cause pain, specially along the line between ring and pinky fingers.

Not marked on these chart but the the anus is a place that can cause a great deal of pain and discomfort. Not exactly elegant, but useful.

You can see the coxis end that can be broken with a kick with really serious results.



Some knee points where you can kick to produce a break or a throw.

After knowing several of these points one must try to use them while training to achieve results related to self protection. As an example:

- have a partner hug you and try to escape pressing on the ribs, nose or neck points

- experiment with an elbow lock using and missing the vital point to see if results change

- lay down under a partner pinning you and get rid of him attacking the nipples, the ribs or the back of the hand

- get mentally used (also mentally used) to kicking the groin of your partner (with protection or without much power)

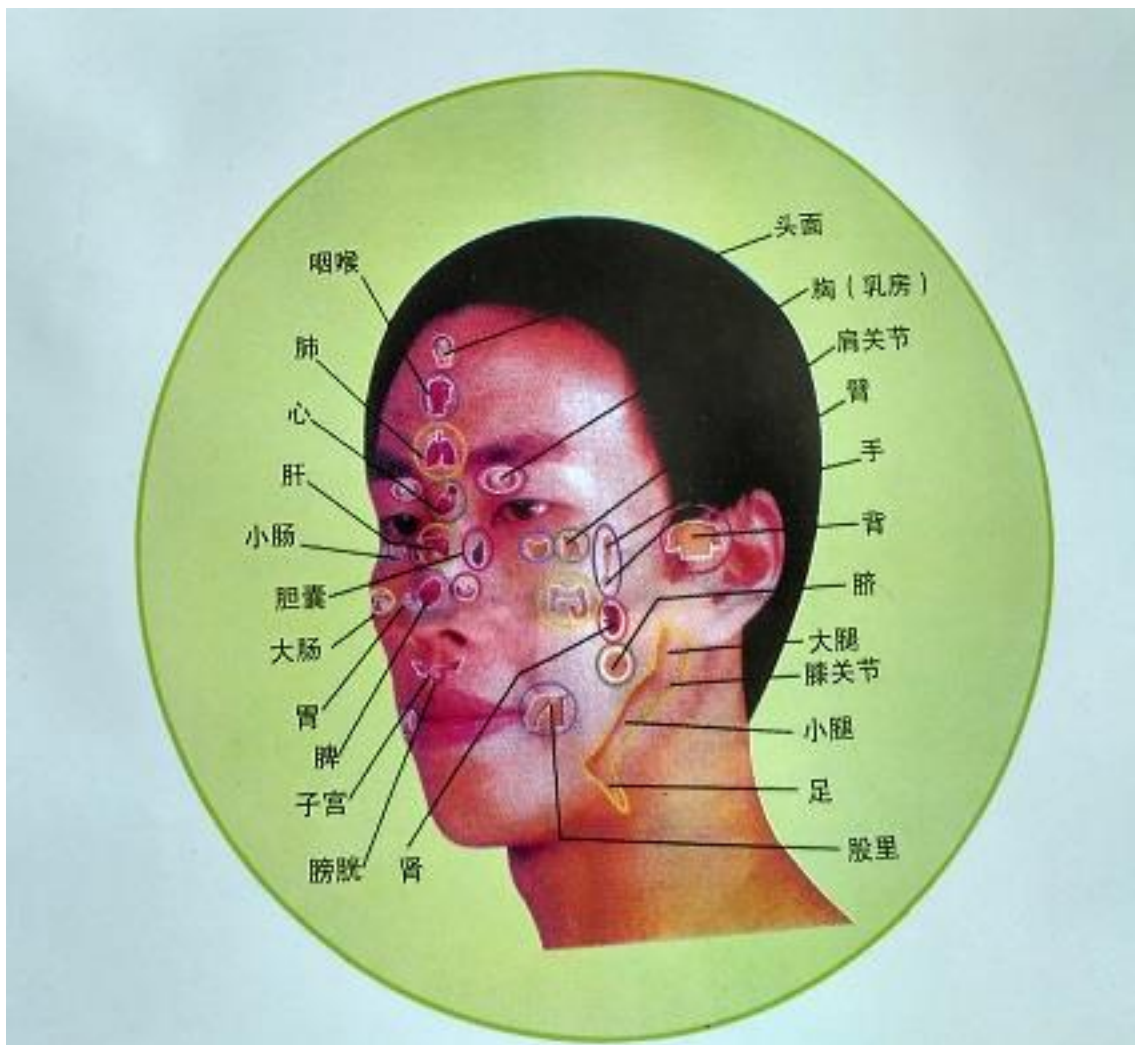
- grab and twist the ears to achieve a head twist

- the anus is a painful place that can be attacked with the thumb in close quarters situations and will cause a shock

- not a vital point per se but twisting (or breaking) a finger will render a hand useless for fighting

- placing the thumbs over the eyes, using the palm to secure the grip on the face, is a favourite Okinawan kumite technique

These special places of the human body can also be used to achieve health benefits. I am no expert on these matters so I will just make a shallow introduction.

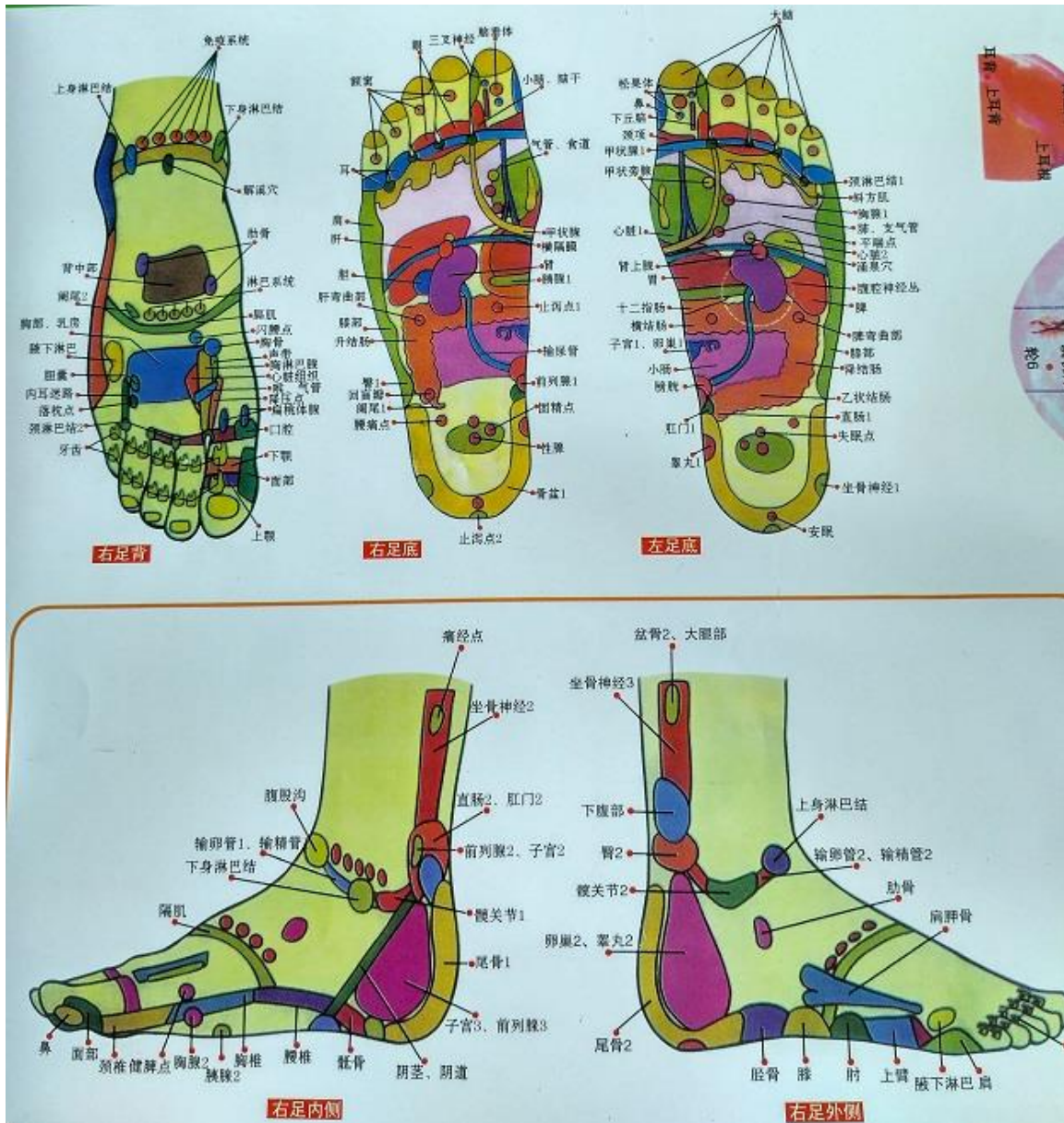


This picture shows how different points of the face are (supposedly) connected to the organs and other body parts. This is based in ancient Chinese medicine

theories, with which I am not familiar, but I included it because the readers may be interested in this extra information. Sadly, I can not translate the writing, but there are illustrations to help you understand.



The hands also reflect body parts. Massaging the points in them can lead to improved health in your organs. All points should produce a little bit of pain when manipulated.



The feet seem to have those organ connections too, so the sole can be massaged to access to health benefits.

So, what can you do if your enemy has knowledge of these vital points? Should you lose all hope?

Actually, you can resist a vital point manipulation. There are several components to it, but the fundamental one is that you can train yourself to endure the pain. Easy as that. You can locate a point in your arm and rub it with your knuckles and cause pain to yourself. You will get used to it. I remember in my old Dojo we had competitions to find out who could endure it for longer time.

One of the effects of training this is that you will learn to recognize the feeling of it, so you will not be caught by surprise. You will know the reason of the pain so you can just discard the discomfort and focus on the task: defending your physical integrity.

A thing I do when I get a massage is asking the masseur to do it strong. That way I get used to hard manipulation of pressure points and also helps me to locate new painful spots.

Before you try it, your eyes will not get used to it, so do NOT try.

As a side note, you can notice that most of the martial arts books assume that the attacker will be a male because, as a matter of fact, males are more prone to fighting. One must assume that when attacked one will face a bigger and stronger enemy so determination and technique must go together in order to save yourself.

But the thing is that you can also be attacked by a woman that is bigger and stronger than you. In this case, all the information in this book still applies but we can add another painful part of the feminine anatomy that can also be used to protect ourselves. The breasts are a very sensitive part of the female bodies and any punch, push, pinch or twist will most surely help you break a hold and buy you some time to escape.

I have never read this advice in a book, and I know it can be controversial, but I feel it can be useful to someone in a moment of danger so I decided to include it.

As a conclusion, I will add the vital points used in Judo atemi waza (yes, Judo has atemi waza):

1. TENTO (heavenly knock out). Position: The middle of the crown of the head. Blow: Downward with the fist.
2. UTO (the sun and the moon). Position: The roots of the eyebrows. Blow: With the fist or knee.
3. JINCHU (center of man). Position: The base of the nose. Blow: With the fist, side of hand or knee.
4. GWANTO (the head of rock). Position: The point of the chin. Blow: Upward or downward with the fist, knee or foot.
5. KASUMI (mist). Position: Temple of the head. Blow: With the fist or side of the hand.

6. SUIGETSU (watery moon). Position: Solar plexus. Blow: With the fist, elbow, knee or foot.
7. DENKO (lightning). Position: Right floating ribs. Blow: With the fist, knee or foot.
8. TSUKIKAGE (shadow of moon). Position: Left floating ribs. Blow: With the fist, knee or foot.
9. MYOJO (bright star). Position: About 1-1/2 inches below the navel. Blow: With the fist, elbow, knee or foot.
10. TSURIGANE. Position: Between the legs. Blow: With the knee, foot or fist.